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ARMY CORRESPONDENCE OF COL.
JOHN LAURENS.

[Continued from the October number.]

[3.]

[RESOLUTION OF CONGRESS GRANTING JOHN LAURENS A
COMMISSION.]

In Congress; 5th Nov^r 1778—

Resolved,

That John Laurens Esq^r Aid de Camp to general Washington be presented with a continental commission of lieutenant colonel in testimony of the sense which Congress entertain of his patriotic & spirited services as a volunteer in the American army, & of his brave conduct in several actions particularly in that on Rhode Island on the 29th day of August last.⁵ And that general Washington be directed whenever an opportunity shall offer, to give lieutenant-colonel Laurens command agreeable to his rank——

Extract from the minutes;

[4.]

[LT. COL. JOHN LAURENS TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.]

Sir

As the approbation of the august Representatives of the United States is the first object of my ambition—the mark of

⁵ See letter, dated Aug. 12, 1778, from Gen. Washington at White Plains to Lt. Col. Laurens at Providence, R. I., directing him to take a letter bearing important information to Count D'Estaing at Newport. In the fight that followed Col. Laurens took part with his usual gallantry. He had previously taken to D'Estaing, when he had announced his intention of quitting Rhode Island and sailing to Boston, a protest against his so doing. It really seems that whenever a spirited and courageous officer was desired for a special mission, Laurens was the man chosen if he was around.

their good opinion in a Resolve of yesterdays date fills me with gratitude—and as it was intended to confer on me an unexpected honor, would have afforded me the highest satisfaction, if I could have accepted it without injuring the rights of the officers in the line of the Army, and doing an evident injustice to my Colleagues in the family of the Commander in chief—Among the former a regular mode of rising is established which I have no desire to infringe—the latter are my seniors and from length of service as well as merit, I humbly conceive have your prior Claims—

Give me leave to assure Congress, that I have not been an indifferent spectator of the Convulsions which have been occasioned in our army by disputes of rank—and that I hold the tranquillity of it too dear to be instrumental in disturbing it—

The motion in my favor yesterday was made without my privity by an honble Gentleman to whom I acknowledge myself much indebted for his kind intentions—but from the considerations above mentioned I must entreat Congress will be pleased to suppress the Resolve and to accept my sincere Thanks for the intended honor—

I blush when I reflect that on my account the attention of Congress has been for a moment diverted from the more weighty Affairs of the Union and I beg the House will accept the assurances of profound Respect—with which I have the honor to be their

much obliged
and most humble serv^t

6th November 1778.

His Excellency

The president of Congress—

Endorsed by John Laurens : Copy of a Letter
to the president
of Congress
6th Novem 1778 ⁶

⁶ In *Mc Clure's Magazine* for December, 1899, James Barnes, with the inaccuracy characteristic of most of the magazine writers who

5.

[EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF CONGRESS SHOWING ACTION TAKEN
ON COL. LAURENS'S LETTER.]

In Congress; 6th Nov^r 1778——

A letter of this day from lieutenant-col. J. Laurens was read, expressing his gratitude for the unexpected honor which Congress were pleased to confer on him by the resolution passed yesterday, & the high satisfaction it would have afforded him, could he have accepted it without injuring the rights of the officers in the line of the army & doing an evident injustice to his colleagues in the family of the commander in chief—that having been a spectator of the convulsions occasioned in the army by disputes of rank he holds the tranquility of it too dear to be instrumental in disturbing : & therefore entreating Congress to suppress the resolve of yesterday ordering him a commission of lieutenant-col. & to accept his sincere thanks for the intended honor". whereupon Resolved,

That Congress highly approve the disinterested & patriotic principles upon which lieutenant-colonel J. Laurens has declined to accept the promotion conferred upon him by Congress.

Extract from the minutes;

Endorsed by John Laurens : Col. Laurens—

attempt to write on South Carolina subjects, gives the following as a copy of the reply sent by Col. Laurens to Congress:

"Colonel Laurens expresses his gratitude for the unexpected honor which Congress were pleased to confer on him by the resolutions passed the day before, and the high satisfaction it would have afforded him, could he have accepted it without injuring the rights of the officers in the line of the army, and doing an evident injustice to his colleagues in the family of the Commander-in-Chief; that, having been a spectator of the convulsions occasioned in the army by disputes of rank, he held the tranquility of it too dear to be instrumental in disturbing it, and therefore entreated Congress to suppress the resolve of yesterday, ordering him a commission of lieutenant-colonel, and to accept his sincere thanks for the intended honor."

[6.]

[LT. COL. ALEXANDER HAMILTON TO LT. COL. JOHN LAURENS.]

Jan^y 8^t 79—

I had written the enclosed and was called off—Some ruffian hand has treated it in the manner you see—I have no time to copy it—I shall take up the story where I left it—

“Another reason for believing the destination is your way, is that Governor Martin and divers others refugees of Georgia South and North Carolina are said to have gone in the fleet—You will have a busy time; acquit yourselves well—

We hope however that some late violent winds will drown them all on their way—

There is no other military news—

Believe me my Dr Laurens I am not insensible of the first mark of your affection in recommending me to your friends for a certain commission. However your partiality may have led you to overrate my qualifications that very partiality must endear you to me;—and all the world will allow that your struggles and scruples upon the occasion deserve the envy of men of vertue.—I am happy you placed the matter upon the footing you did, because I hope it will ultimately engage you to accept the appointment. Had it fallen to my lot, I should have been flattered by such a distinction but I should have felt all your embarrassments.

Of this however I need have no apprehension—Not one of the four in nomination but would stand a better chance than myself; and yet my vanity tells me they do not all merit a preference—But I am a stranger in this country—I have no property here, no connexions—If I have talents and integrity (, as you say I have) these are justly deemed very spurious titles in these enlightened days, when unsupported by others more solid; and were it not for your example, I should be inclined in considering the composition of a certain body, to suppose that three fourths of them are mortal enemies to the

first and three fourths of the other fourth have a laudable contempt for the last—

Adieu God preserve and
prosper you

A Hamilton

I have strongly solicited leave to go to the Southward—It could not be refused; but arguments have been used to dissuade me from it, which however little weight they may have had in my judgment gave law to my feelings. I am chagrined and unhappy but I submit—In short Laurens I am disgusted with every thing in this world but yourself and *very* few more honest fellows and I have no other wish than as soon as possible to make a brilliant exit—'Tis a weakness; but I feel I am not fit for this terrestreal Country.—
All the Lads embrace you. The General⁷ sends his love—
Write to him as often as you can.⁸

[7.]

[LT. COL. TENCH TILGHMAN TO LT. COL. JOHN LAURENS.]

Addressed: Lieu^t Col^o Laurèns

Aide de Camp to the
Commander in Chief
Philadelphia

From
Head Quarters }
Orange Town }

Head Quarters Orange Town 27 Sep^r 1780

My Dear Laurens.

Surely providence has had a hand in the timely discovery of the hellish plot, of which you have heard the report—the particulars I will give you, and the mode of

⁷ Washington.

⁸ On the back of the letter Col. Laurens made the following memoranda respecting the defense of Charles Town (1780, probably):

Defence of passes confined
to Ashley River—

discovery, as far as they have come to my knowledge—A well dressed Gentleman was taken on Saturday last, below our Guards in West Chester County, by a small scout of Militia—He immediately offered so large a sum for his release, that the officer was convinced he was of importance—secured him—and carried to him Major Tallmadge of the 2^d Reg^t of Dragoons—the most advanced officer on the lines. On searching him, draughts of West point were found in his Boots, and some other papers, which were instantly sent to His Excellency, (supposing he was still at Harford) and the person put under the strictest confinement—He said his name was Anderson, and a British officer—confessed appearances were against him—but nevertheless hoped he should be able to make it out that he was a prisoner of War, and not a spy—He was not in Regimentals—

Finding himself guarded in a manner, which would not admit of a possibility of escape, his spirits drooped, and he confessed himself Major André of the 54th Reg^t and Adj^t. Gen^l to the British Army.

Major Tallmadge must, I think, have had some suspicion that Arnold was concerned, because he did report André to him, but kept him close at his own quarters. Arnold did not hear of it until Monday Noon, when he, in a moment, pushed down to his Barge—got on board of her, and went off to the Vulture sloop which lay about 7 Miles below King's Ferry—

Jo: Smith (who married in Charlestown and lived near King's ferry) decamped the instant the thing took wind. He has been overtaken—is clearly a partner in the guilt, and

Bar—Neck—Frigates
& armed ships—
En's efforts reduced to
an attack by land—if our
superiority in the harbour
be maintained—
This can only be effected
by the Defence of the Bar —

has been by this time, or will be, hanged with André. There are doubtless more accomplices, who I hope will come out. His Excellency is still at West point endeavouring to sift the plot—

I believe all the preparations of embarkation at New York were really intended to accomplish this important stroke—They kept up the appearance of a sea Voyage, the better to masque the true design. And had they succeeded—almost farewell liberty—The North River up to Lake George—The Mohawk River up to Fort Schuyler would have been possessed, and consequently an immense supply of Bread, with the advantage of an easy communication to and from Canada, by the Lakes—Our communication with the Eastern States, on which we depend more for Meat, and with the French troops, cut off or rendered extremely precarious—In fact, my friend, the more you consider consequences, the more terrible they appear: Had André have got down, the night of execution would probably have been that, on which, His Excellency—the Marquis—Genl Knox.—Col^o Gouvion, and the Gentlemen of the several families would have been at Arnolds quarters—Infernal Villain—

I am told the true places of attack were marked upon the plans, and Arnold was to have sent his force against the feints—consequently—an easy entrance would have been found by the enemy—

Sir Henry Clinton and Arnold have, by a contrivance which would have disgraced Children for its folly, fixed the Rope upon poor Andre, had there not been sufficient evidence before—Arnold writes a letter to Sir Harry and informs him that Major André came up to West point by virtue of his passport to see him on special business respecting himself, and to convey confidential papers to Sir Harry—That after the interview he was returning with his pass; but that for certain reasons it was thought best for Mr André to assume the name of Jn^o Anderson. This letter is inclosed to Genl Washington under a very polite one from Sir Harry, who

makes no doubt but Major André will be permitted to return after the foregoing circumstances are known—

You shall have the sequel of his fate in my next—but without being a prophet you may devine it—

Have you rec^d letters God bless and preserve you says
from Hamilton and Gibbs y^r Affectionate
dated the 15th inst^t or thereabouts. Tench Tilghman

Endorsed by John Laurens: L Col. Tilghman.

Endorsed by Henry Laurens: Tench Tilghman
Orange town
27th Sep^r 1780.—